

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting 25th November 2009:

The Council met in the Village Hall @ 7.30pm. There was an attendance of 7 Parish Councillors, District Councillor – Mrs D. O'Callaghan and four Parishioners

Apologies for absence: Mr B. Toms and Mr A. Palmer

Open Forum: Mr D. Horton asked to discuss his recent planning application at Gerston. He explained that prior to the application being presented to the Parish Council he had chosen not to speak about it or to give a presentation as he didn't want to comprise the Parish Councillors positions. He then asked if his wife Mrs C. Horton could address the meeting and explain further about the proposal of the application which had not been received entirely favourable by the Parish Council. Mrs Horton addressed the meeting, she gave a brief history of their farm and that Mr Horton was a third generation farmer, they run 700 acres of land with a beef herd of 600 animals which are sold to local butchers and abattoirs. They pride themselves on their farm and hope that the village feels the same. Their main holding is at Woodhouse where they keep 300 animals and their feed. They used to have another shed at Sandypark but lost that when it was sold. The sighting of another shed at Woodhouse is not ideal as the area is already quite built up and is near to the water course. This would also lead to any waste water from another shed becoming a strong potential for pollution. Since putting in their application South Hams Agricultural Consultants have agreed that there is a need for a further agricultural building, Mr & Mrs Horton had considered sighting such building at Wellpark (which is on their land near the corner of SandyPark, on the old Salcombe Road) but this is right on the skyline and would be far more visible from Kingsbridge, also the access for lorries would not be ideal. At Gerston they rent 150 acres but they have no building for housing the animals, if there was such provision the animals taken there could be kept on site with feed, straw etc, any dung could be kept and used there, rather than being taken from one site to the other. It would also be better for the public as the road in recent years has become a far busier road and the cattle are usually run along the road from Gerston to Woodhouse and vice versa. Mrs Horton explained that they had had a site visit with the planners and landscaping team. She explained also that a lot of thought had been put into the application and what was suitable for the site. They did not realise that the application would cause such controversy and felt that they had made a mistake by not approaching the Parish Council prior to submission. Mr Horton said that there were far better sites on Gerston but these had a greater visual impact and the site chosen was thought to blend in better with the surroundings. He also felt that the Parish Councillors should have site visits when making their comments, he asked how many councillors had actually visited this site. Three out of five of the Councillors at the meeting had been to the site. Mrs Horton continued by saying that they were not “conning” anyone into

thinking that the application was for more than a shed for the animals. The idea for wanting the shed at Gerston was also to keep the herds separate as regards TB. If the herds were contained in different sites the TB issues would be moderated. Gerston is a relatively TB free zone, whereas badger activity at Woodhouse has increased. Mr & Mrs Horton will be pursuing a building somewhere as there is a need for it. Mr Horton felt very uncomfortable about the fact that councillors could ask for discretion when making comments about applications. The Chairman explained that councillors make comments on a sheet passed around with the applications whether they are in favour or not of the particular application along with any suggestions they have. Mrs Horton continued by saying that she had had concerns for a while about the way the Parish Council was running, she felt that it was not open enough and could unintentionally comprise themselves. The Chairman advised her that he had spoken to South Hams Councils legal team and in their opinion we were not doing anything wrong, but if we wished to protect ourselves from future criticism we should get two signatories on each planning statement submitted. Both Mr & Mrs Horton felt that if Councillors wished to comment on applications they should be able to stand by the comments they made and not ask for unanimity. The Chairman explained that on this occasion he had signed off the planning statement before submitting it to South Hams Council as the Clerk did not wish to deal with the paperwork, Mr Horton asked why, and the Chairman informed him that in effect the Clerk had declared an interest and did not want to be put in the position of knowing which Councillors had written what comments being that the applicants and the Clerk are friends. The Chairman was asked if he had declared an interest, he answered that he hadn't and had filled in the planning statement word for word as written by the Councillors. Mr A. Clarke said that he felt that the Councillors were not being unfair in their comments and no one should be put under pressure to declare what they had written. He advised Mr Horton that he was pro the application. He also said that at times the Councillors will have to make decisions that are uncomfortable but we always operate under the guidelines that we believe to be correct. Mr Horton still maintained that Councillors should stand by their comments and be accountable. There should be openness and clarity. Mrs Horton said that they would now be moving on with consultations with the Agricultural Consultants. The Chairman thanked Mr & Mrs Horton for their comments and further on the Agenda there will be the opportunity for the Parish Councillors to decide whether there should be a change in the way things are done regarding planning procedures.

Other matters discussed included the footpath on the hill this is in need of cutting back as it is in a bad state. It appears that it had been omitted from South Hams Councils work schedule. The roadside hedge had been done but not the inside where the problems seem to be.

District Councillor- Mrs D. O'Callaghan: Reported that car parking charges were to rise by 10p per hour, although this has not yet been approved by committee. The

residents permits will be retained but may go up in price. She also reported that the Business Forum would be held at 6.30pm tomorrow at Follaton House. Mrs Doyle asked the District Councillor about parking meters being placed in Fore Street. Apparently the County Council have made no decision about this yet. There has been resistance in Dartmouth and Kingsbridge, but the meters are already in place in Totnes.

Minutes: The Minutes of the last Meeting held on the 2nd October 2009 were confirmed and signed. Copies thereof having been supplied to each Councillor prior to the Meeting.

Matters Arising:

a. Car Park Light – Town Park: Thanks to Devon County Council we now have the money in the bank to finance the light, we will proceed in the new year.

b. School Communications: We are currently receiving a weekly newsletter and the Chairman asked the Councillors if they were happy with this. It was agreed that we were happy with this arrangement.

c. New Noticeboard: We have had permission from the householder in Tacket Wood to put up the new noticeboard and as soon as it is ready it will be fitted.

d. Diocesan Invoice: The PCC have agreed to pay half and they have given us a cheque for their share. The invoice has now been settled in full.

e. Main Road Parking: It appears that there are cars still parking on the double yellow lines this is impeding the cars exiting Woodlane.

f. Church Wall Update: This is still ongoing and the latest report we have had is that the Diocese Engineers and the South Hams Councils Engineers have “fallen out” over what they feel is the best solution for the repairs to the wall. Also faculties have to be sought from the Diocese before any work can be undertaken. We will await further updates.

g. Tor Homes: All communications with Tor Homes seem to have gone quiet since we removed their sign from the car park.

Mrs M. Kitt said that in her opinion there had only been a couple of occasions in the last few weeks when the car park had been full. 99% of the time there were spaces available.

Chairman's Report: The Chairman reported that he had had a meeting with Rachel Perkins the new head at the School. They agreed that it would be very beneficial for

everyone if we forged stronger communication links. It was agreed that the Parish Council would receive weekly copies of the news letter, and that Rachel would attend and give an annual report at the Parish Annual Meeting. Grass cutting at the school costs £468 per annum along with hedge trimming and sports day marking out. Out of this £168 is for cutting the Parish Playing Field. Subsequently after this meeting the Chairman spoke to Devon County Council who confirmed that they cut the grass under instruction from the school. He suggested that they continue to cut the grass but the Parish Council should reimburse the school annually. It was also agreed to give a list of names to the school containing members of the Parish that might be able to contribute some historical memoirs. The school would like to interview these people during the morning assembly. He also reported that on the 13th October he had attended a Parish Cluster Meeting, on the agenda was the Local Development Framework Site Allocation a brief introduction by South Hams Council was given and then slides showing the draft copy of the site allocation drawn up by the Princes Foundation. Each Village that had been recognized as having a requirement for affordable homes was shown. West Alvington was included despite not meeting all the necessary criteria. However the site most favoured by the Foundation was the land in front of the Ring O'Bells. Objection was voiced at the meeting saying while we were grateful that our village had been included it was a shame the views of the Parish and the support of the Parish Council had not been taken onboard. A subsequent letter to the Foundation was sent and further lobbying to the Local Development Dept. of South Hams Council. We will be given further opportunity to express our views once the final draft has been released.

South Hams Housing Strategy & The Code of Conduct – there was little to report regarding these items. Management of Open Spaces – strong opposition was voiced by ourselves regarding this latest idea of cost cutting by South Hams Council. Mention was made of the previous attempt and the latest medical finding regarding growth of a child's brain. District Councillor Denise O'Callaghan raised the point that this policy change had not been discussed by the full council. She and Kingsbridge Town Councillor Peter Howarth attempted to support the change and thought children in West Alvington should use the play facilities in Kingsbridge. The Chairman suggested the money being wasted on the new skate park could be better used in Play Equipment throughout the South Hams. Money for this had been made available from a “capital account”. On the 14th October the Council had been invited to attend an all morning meeting of the Development Control and Conservation User Group. It started at 9.30am and ended at lunch time. The Vanguard initiative was discussed and what agents, architects etc, think of the present planning system and how it might be improved. It was most interesting to talk to the agents etc and hear their problems. Once again far improved communication was desired, and more continuity with Officers and more involvement with Parish/Town Councils. On the 28th October the Chairman attended the South Hams Council Annual Parish/Town Council Budget Forum, they are having to make further cuts and so are looking at all the options. Letter of complaint had been received from Midships, regarding the closure of the

footpath below the bungalow at Town Park, this was followed by a further three parishioners all concerned about the closure. He met with one person at the site to explain the situation which had been misunderstood. Concerns had been raised about the parking around the junction of Lower Street and Townsend Road, the parking of the caravan and parking towards Elmfield. The police had been asked again if the caravan can be removed. There had been a complaint that water was flooding over the road at Stockwell Cottage perhaps as a result of work carried out by the owner. Devon Highways were informed and have now cleared adjacent drains under road gully. There was also a complaint that water was flooding the garden and drive of Porch House again this was resolved. Another complaint was received that gully clearing goes up to the Kingsbridge side of Tacket Wood Bridge but no further. Devon Highways have been asked to continue up to the entrance to Tacket Wood itself. Devon Highways asked for the owners details of the field between Oldaway and the main road. Details were given and hedge cutting had been completed. Concern has been raised over cars parking in Town Park Car Park as a result of the parking restrictions around the Community college. A complaint had been received about a hole that had appeared in the road at the junction to Longfields and water was seeping out of it, the appropriate authority has been notified and it appears to be due to a burst water pipe. Finally the Chairman reported that he had attended the Primary Schools assembly in the Church celebrating their recent “Outstanding Ofsted Report”

Vice Chairman's Report: Mrs G. Doyle reported that she had recently attended a public enquiry at Thurlestone Hotel regarding Mr A. Butt's application at Yarnacombe Farm, trading as Eagle Valley Ltd, for a restricted goods vehicle operators licence, proposing the use of 1 vehicle and 2 trailers. The inquiry was held by the Office of the Traffic Commissioner.

Following on from this Mrs Doyle reported that the Clerk had been approached by Mr Butt and his concerns about the way the Council was conducting itself, he felt that the Council was “corrupt” and that he had been victimised, he stated he intended to take matters further. Mrs Doyle said that until such times as he decides to take action nothing further can be done.

The Chairman added that Mr Butts complaints seemed to be of a personal nature against him so as a consequence asked the Clerk and Mrs Doyle to deal with any future correspondence regarding this matter from Mr Butt.

Parish Reports:

a. Church: Mr D. Dainty reported that the recent Gift Day had raised £1,100:00. Mr Dainty thanked all the parishioners for their generosity. He also reported that Mr Steve Ball was hoping to be ordained soon. There is to be an Advent Benefice Service on Sunday. At this point the Chairman suggested that we again gave a donation towards the floodlight this year. It was proposed by Mrs G. Doyle and

seconded by Mr D. Horton. All in favour.

b. Village Hall: Mrs G. Doyle reported that the committee had held a meeting last week. The committee have recently lost two members and if anyone would be interesting in joining they met three times a year for approx. ½ hour. She also reported that the bank outside the front of the Village Hall needs tidying up, Tor Homes have cleared it once and will not do it again. At present Mr T. Reeves does the top of the bank but the rest needs doing. The Chairman and Mr. D. Horton offered to undertake the work.

c. Parish Fun Day: Mr A. Clarke asked whether we felt that we wanted to hold another one next year. If so we need to find a date when we can liaise with the Horticultural Society and any other bodies who can help us with side shows etc. The Chairman asked Mr Clarke if he would be prepared to contact Mr K. Steer to find a compatible date as soon as possible, so that we can prepare for next year. Everyone was happy that Mr Clarke undertake this task.

d. Burial Site: We have had one new burial and two new headstone applications.

Parish Council Planning Procedures: The Chairman raised the subject following recent concerns about the way the Parish Council addresses its planning issues. At present a planning form is passed to the Parish Councillors for them to comment on the application and decide whether they are in favour or not. Did the Council feel that this form should be a public document or should it remain an in house document. And whether having their name put against it put off any Councillor from making comment. It was asked whether we should have a change of form whereby a Councillor can make comment but the other members would be unable to see their comments. So they would not feel influenced by another Councillors comments. Mrs Doyle felt that if applicants were able to see the comments written by the Councillors they could have the potential to sue you if they felt you were being unfair. Mr Clarke felt that as long as the Councillors acted within the boundaries and the comments were not slanderous everything should be alright. Mr Horton asked Mrs O'Callaghan whether the public have the right to see what each individual Councillor has written at the planning meetings at Follaton House. Mrs O'Callaghan informed him that minutes are taken at the public meeting, a summary is given but names are not. Councillors are not obliged to put their names against comments. It was suggested that the Parish Council could forge a Planning Committee like a town council whereby a few rather than all the Councillors would have a say on each application. The way West Alvington Parish Council deals with their applications means that all the Parish Councillors have a chance to comment on the applications for their Parish. It was then suggested that we have individual sheets of paper for each Councillor to comment on and then place in a sealed envelope. Mr Horton still felt that if a Councillor is to make comment then they should be

prepared to stand by it and if the comments are genuine then there should be nothing to be afraid of in making it.

At this point the Chairman asked whether Mr & Mrs Horton would leave the room whilst the Chairman explained about the situation that had given rise for the need to make possible changes to the way planning issues were dealt with.

He explained that a Councillor had made comment against Mr & Mrs Horton's application and had also sent the comments in a letter to the Chairman asking that the comments given should remain anonymous and as they felt it may "destroy a friendship" discretion was asked for. They felt strongly about the application and believed they had the right to comment as they did. The Chairman felt it would be inappropriate to reveal the source and that we did indeed not have to. However to demonstrate the freedom to express a view the Chairman briefly displayed the completed comment sheet and then raised concern on how much less credible would such documents be if Councillors views were to be named alongside their comments. Mr and Mrs Horton were then invited back to the meeting.

Mr Horton commented that he felt uncomfortable about being asked to leave the room whilst things were being discussed. Mr Clarke felt that it would have been more awkward for the matter to be discussed if Mr & Mrs Horton were in the room. District Councillor commented nothing inappropriate had been discussed in their absence.

It was decided that we should think about what further action should be taken on how Councillors comment in the future.

Mr D. Dainty suggested that we defer this until a later date. It was also suggested that we make it known that the Parish Council welcomes applicants to make a presentation if they so wish.

Planning Applications:

a. Mr A. Marr: Retrospective householder application for decking and balcony above garage at 12 Highfield Drive, Kingsbridge. 9 in favour.

b. Mr Blunt: Amendments to householder application 28/0191/09/F for erection of conservatory to include addition of small extension at 28 Embankment Road, Kingsbridge. 9 in favour.

c. Mr R. Daniels: Householder application for replacement conservatory at 29 Town Park, West Alvington. 10 in favour.

d. Mr E. Stidston: General purpose agricultural building at Court Barton Farm, South Huish, Kingsbridge. 9 in favour.

e. A.A Horton & Son: Woodhouse Farm, West Alvington application for erection of agricultural building to house animals and farm machinery at Gerston Farm, Kingsbridge. 6 against 2 in favour 1 abstention.

Planning Decisions:

a. Mr V. Taylor: **Grant of Planning Permission** for householder application for alterations and extension at Peelers Peace, Tacket Wood. Kingsbridge.

Financial Report:

The Clerk reported the following balances:

Lloyds TSB	Current Account	4306:00
Lloyds TSB	Savings Account	112.37
Lloyds TSB	Parish Plan Account	1179:29
Abbey National	P3 Account	378:83

Cheques to be drawn:

Village Hall	10:00
Mr G Hallett – Hedge Cutting	80:00
Mr S Wright – Stamps/stationary/website	53:25

Car Park Rental 350:00 by direct debit

Local Development Plan Update: This was discussed during the Chairman's report. Mr M. Adams asked about the plans for the field behind the Ring O'Bells, he wanted to know how much of it would be used for the proposed affordable housing. The Chairman was unable to answer and suggested waiting for more clearer details becoming available.

Coffee Mornings: The Chairman reported that PCSO Gibson was interested in holding surgeries in the Village for parishioners to discuss any issues they may have. It was suggested previously that as the Church wished to resurrect the coffee mornings that used to be held that the two could be combined. It was decided to trial the coffee mornings in December on a Wednesday between 10 and 11am to see how it is. Posters are to be put up and an advert put on the website.

Annual Precept Considerations: We need to discuss the budget for next year. Apparently, the school have been charged £168 this year by Devon County Council for the grass cutting in the playing field. The Chairman asked the Councillors if it

would be prudent to offer to pay for this service. Mrs G. Doyle felt that we should offer to pay. It was proposed by Mrs G.Doyle and seconded by Mr D. Dainty, all were in favour.

A.O.B by direction of the Chairman: Mrs Doyle reported that water was still seeping out from outside the Vicarage in the road, this should be Tor Homes responsibility. Mr Clarke asked Mr Dainty if he would be willing to undertake the West Alvington in Bloom Competition again next year as it was excellent. Should we bring the the date forward in order to get the blooms at their best?

It was also asked whether we should restart the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme again in the light of a spate of vandalism recently when 23 mirrors were ripped off the cars on the main road. Apparently someone has since been arrested.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.55pm. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 13th January 2010 @ 7.30pm.

The Chairman suggested that we invite guests to attend the meeting. The suggestions were Lee Bray – Head of Forward Planning, Graham Swiss – LDF, Mark Seymour – Director of Resources and Mr Tucker – Leader of the Council.